5. The Tribal Community

The scattering of the population over wide areas and their unstable manner of living, both a result of the climatic conditions of the country, has not permitted the social and civil life of the Hottentots to establish rigid norms. In addition, the confusions of the last years have swept away the ancient customs that had persisted until recently, so that a unified presentation of the social life of the Hottentots in their state and community is impossible today. The traveler [318] can only note those basic beliefs that he finds in his dealings with the natives which are still alive among the people even though they may not be publicly expressed. The little that I can report here concerns the Hottentots' views about property, sexual relations, and power.

1. Property

The only instances of private ownership of land probably occur only in the *nara*-fields of the Kuiseb region behind Walvis Bay. The hut is movable property and the so-called "gardens" were originally foreign to the Hottentot and do not count here. The usable stretches of land, the pasture areas, are common property of the families who have their cattle there. The right to this pasture area exists only as long as no stronger community contests it. Battles for pastures and cattle have been fought by the Hottentots among themselves from time immemorial. The lack of organization beyond the narrow tribal bounds has contributed greatly to the splintering of national power.

Within the tribe (another ethic exists in regard to the white man) private ownership of movable property, especially cattle, is sufficiently protected. Theft is considered a serious wrong and is very severely punished (see Power).

Repayment of a debt (again only among themselves) is considered a matter of honor but is often taken lightly enough: "*Iaiis ge ǂareya oa ni re ma tsi*," i.e. When the rock-rabbit gets a tail (i.e. never), I will give it back to you."

In spite of the Hottentot's strictness in preserving his own private property rights, he is not at all miserly. He not only divides the last thing he has with his own people, he is (and was particularly so as all the older accounts testify) particularly hospitable to passing strangers. It would be superfluous to prove again that this hospitality was not based on a shrewd expectation of getting some advantage, but on a deeply rooted feeling of brotherhood.

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the */naras* and *tsamma* are preferred most of all, on account of both the water content of the flesh and the food value of the kernel. The Topnaars in the vicinity of Walvis Bay still live for a considerable part of the year almost exclusively on the */naras*, and hence are often known by the tribal name of */Naranin*.

All the food obtained is generally shared in common. If game is brought home, the whole camp gathers about the hut of the possessor till all the meat is consumed, and so too with everything else. Even to-day in South-West Africa if a Nama has anything to eat, e.g. a piece of meat or bread, he is bound by old custom to share it with anyone coming up to him. Failure to do so would expose him to the greatest contempt. The communal meal, as we shall see, is one of the outstanding features in the ceremonial life of the people; while in ordinary life their hospitality is so generous and far-reaching that their economic system has in consequence been termed by several writers a sort of communism.

There is as a rule no fixed time for eating. Only the morning meal, taken after the cows have been milked and driven out to pasture, has a special name, *sabes*. The time and place of the other meals are regulated according to circumstance: in camp by the return of the herds from pasture, on the march by outspans, on the hunt by a successful shot, and so on. The preparation of meals is the task of the women, and generally each woman prepares the food for her family on the fire in the hut. Normally both men and women now eat together, each family by itself, but there are certain communal meals in which the sexes are strictly separated or in which only the members of one sex may take part. According to Kolb, however, men and women among the Cape Hottentots always ate apart, all the people of each sex eating together. This separation of the sexes at meals he attributes to the fear that one of the women might be menstruating, and would thus contaminate any men associating with her or coming near her.[1] There is evidence also, as we shall see in discussing the boys' puberty ceremonies, that among the Naman the men at least formerly ate together and apart from their wives.

There is little information as to the existence of food taboos among the Hottentots in more recent times. The only well-authenticated instance is in the case of the hare, which in all the tribes might be eaten only by women and children, and was strictly forbidden to men

[1] Op. cit., 122–3.

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Immediately she is in the hut, her relations commence slaughtering animals to provide in her honour the feast known as *kharu ǂap*, "menstruation killing." All her nearer relatives contribute to this killing, even her older married brothers, if she has any. Everything slaughtered must be female, and above all a heifer must be provided. The entrails, pluck, etc., of these animals must on no account be eaten by any relative, either maternal or paternal, of the girl. The visiting friends enjoy them. This *kharu ǂap* is the great feast for the women, all who have already passed through the puberty rites being able to take part in it. The only exceptions to this rule are that no menstruating woman may eat of the meat, "lest the girl's period never stop," nor any pregnant woman, "lest the girl's period stop never to return." No man or boy either was formerly supposed to take any part at all in the feast, but nowadays, owing to the extreme poverty of the people, males are allowed to share the meat of all but one of the first animals killed. The women cook and eat the meat outside the hut, while the *aba tarâs* takes her share, always part of the outer flesh, inside. The girl and her friends remain in the *kharu oms*, drinking plenty of milk and eating all the meat they can. As the time of her seclusion draws to a close, the feasting takes on bigger proportions, regulated always of course by the relatives. The young people of the kraal begin practising the reed dance, and the girl's friends, both male and female, play and dance round the hut in which she is confined. Then, at last, the day before she is to come out, a long series of purification rites takes place.

First, during the day, the *aba tarâs* enters the girl's enclosure, and cleanses her of all her *axu ǂaiǂ*, child dirt. This is very thoroughly done with melted butter and moist cowdung, every inch of the girl's body being well scoured. The *aba tarâs* smears the salve all over the body of the girl, and after allowing it to dry slightly rolls it off again with the palm of her hand. She then collects it carefully, and hides it in an ant-heap or animal's hole when no one is looking. The girl is now given a complete set of new clothing, the old woman carrying off the discarded one. In former days it was at this time that the girl changed her maiden's apron for the full woman's dress; hence these puberty rites are sometimes referred to as the *broek-kaross slagt*, from the Dutch term *broek-kaross* (lit. breeches-kaross) applied to the woman's rear apron. Next the girl is led into the outer hut by the *aba tarâs*, with whom she prepares a meal for the other women assembled to meet her. Nowadays she prepares tea or coffee, but

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formerly a ewe was specially slaughtered for the occasion. This cooking is the first done on the fire since the girl entered the *kharu oms*. The *aba tards* must hold her hand as she takes the pot, and aid her with everything she does. Soot from the pot is put on her forehead, and together the old woman and she eat a piece of meat prepared apart from the rest. So she is made free to cook and prepare a meal once more.[1] Then the *aba tards* takes the fire, ashes and all, and dumps it far from the hut. She next sprinkles fresh sand on the hearth, and lays a new fire, which must not be lit from another, as is usually done when a fire goes out, but with flint or matches; originally no doubt the firesticks would have been used. The fire thus lit is no longer */nau*.

The girl is now ready to receive visitors as an *oaxais*, a young marriageable woman. All her relatives and friends pour in, each with some present of beads, or earrings, or other finery. A great deal of this is only lent, and is returned later. The girl shines with clean, well-greased skin, she is scented all over with the *buchu* she and her friends have ground, her face is painted in various curious patterns with red and white mineral powder mixed with fat, and her body is loaded with the presents. Then the young boys, even up to sixteen years of age and more, come into the hut from which they have hitherto been excluded, and go up to the newly-made *oaxais*. She takes her "powder-puff" full of *buchu*, and with it rubs each of them on his testicles. This ensures fertility and is a protection against sexual diseases. This particular rite seems to be dying out, and nowadays is accounted for by the saying that until the boys have been rubbed in this way it is too dangerous for them to eat any of the meat prepared for the girl. In consequence the younger boys especially go at eagerly, so that they may join in the feast!

The feasting reaches its climax this day. Female animals, both ewes and heifers, are killed, cooked, and eaten, and everybody, men and women, boys and girls alike, joins in this "feast of rejoicing". Hahn states that when the relatives appear for this final feast, the girl's nearest male relative (usually the eldest unmarried cousin) takes the tail of one of the heifers, hangs it over her head, and wishes that she

[1] The description of this part of the ceremony is taken from the version given by Mrs. Hoernlé [illegible] account ("Social Value of Water," 324). In the earlier version ("Conception [illegible]," 70), she says that the dressing of the girl and the change of clothing is made in front of the inner hut, i.e. in the outer hut, and goes on to say: "Meanwhile, a ewe has been slaughtered, and one of the hind legs is given to the *aba tards*. This she must now cook on the fire in the house. . . When the meat is cooked, it is eaten by the *aba tards* and other women who, in her, are past childbearing. No one else touches it."

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may be as fruitful as a young cow and have many children. The other friends repeat the wish.[1]

Towards evening the girl's friends enter the hut to fetch her out, and for the last time she must leave it by the special opening made for her at the back. Her friends surround her, and for a time try to keep her from the view of the youths, for she is very shy. The youths now start the reed dance, forming the inner ring, while the girls, with the *oaxais* in their midst, dance round them in an outer ring. Every now and then there is a change of partners, and gradually the youths get to the side of the girl and choose her as partner, till in the end her shyness has all gone. During the dancing she throws *buchu* over the men and boys as she sees them; this is supposed to bring good luck. The dancing often lasts through the night, and when it is over the final round of rites begins, reintroducing the girl to her daily tasks, "freeing her, as it were," says Mrs. Hoernlé, "from the spell under which she has hung."

Early on the following morning she is led out of her hut by the *aba tards*, accompanied by her girl and boy friends. She is conducted round the kraal, and as she goes along picks up earth from the cattle-folds and strews it about, plucks twigs and blossoms from the various trees and bushes she passes by, and also scatters *buchu* as she goes. Every male thing, too, she touches, be it ram, calf, or man, as well as the milking vessels in the huts. The explanation given for this was that such a young girl brings fertility to all she touches, and that the day after she had come out of her hut it was sure to rain and there would be plenty in the land.[2] Next she milks a cow, if possible a young cow calving for the first time, the *aba tards* supporting her arm as she does so. This milk is */nau*, to be drunk only by the old woman herself or others of her age. Once this milking has taken place, the girl can resume her milking duties with impunity.

Similarly she is reintroduced to all her other daily tasks by the *aba tards*. They gather wood together, collect roots and berries together in the veld, and so on. Finally, towards evening, when the usual time comes for getting the household supply of water, they go together, accompanied by all the old women of the kraal, to the water-hole. Here the *aba tards* takes wet mud from the water and rubs it on the girl's legs, then with a branch in her hand splashes water over the girl. Finally both of them take hold of the branch and strike the

[1] "Die Nama-Hottentotten," 307, quoted by Hoernlé; cf. Wikar, op. cit., 100.
[2] Cf. also Hoernlé, *Riekerwald*, 17; Alexander, loc. cit.

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rule to intrusion, so long as sufficient grass and water were available for all.

Of the sentiments of the Hottentots towards their land we have but little information. Mrs. Hoernlé, in one of her recent papers, maintains that even to-day the old tribal land is still closely connected in the minds of the people with their ancestors. The ghosts of the *//naon*, the ancestors, haunt any old locality occupied by the tribe, and anybody visiting such a place must protect himself against them and propitiate them if he is to escape. "Thus, ten years ago," says Mrs. Hoernlé, "I visited, with a native guide, a spot which had long been deserted by the Topnaars. It was a long day's journey up and down great sand dunes, and both I and my guide caught bad colds. The next day my guide's wife came to see me, shaking her head wisely. 'I knew I should find you ill,' she said, 'and I have been scolding my husband, who should have known better. When you got to Wortel you should have gone straight to the water, and put a stripe of wet clay on your legs and on your forehead, and then you should have said:—

Ti [|Naoun |Huis — My ancestors' territory
|Gaise |khai loa te re — Run nicely to meet me
aike mutse — I see you first.

Then all would have been well.'" "The important thing here," continues Mrs. Hoernlé, "is that one begs the goodwill of the spirits, claims relationship with them, and enters once more into possession of the old tribal territory by contact with its waters."

A similar ceremony takes place when a Nama goes visiting relatives in another tribe. The head of the kraal visited must take wet clay and soot from the pot, and put a broad stripe on the visitor's forehead, so that he may be able to "eat nicely and drink nicely". "Here it would seem," remarks Mrs. Hoernlé, "that the stranger is given the protection of the society into which he has entered, and is free from danger that might otherwise beset him in a strange place. The preceding example shows perhaps what the danger is, namely, the hostile *|Hai |Nun* [ghosts of dead people], and this example makes a little clearer the nature of the protection sought when one is visiting an old locality of the tribe. One identifies oneself with the place and its spirits, and so gets protection and support instead of hostility."[1]

From the facts just noted, one would almost have expected to find the fear of hostile ancestral spirits acting both as a guarantee of possession to the resident tribe and as a sort of supernatural restraint

[1] "The Social Value of Water among the Naman", 519–20.

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224 554 A somewhat similar ceremony was held among the Cape Hottentots, but the description given of it by Kolb differs from the above, and is therefore worth recording. The skill and dexterity displayed in the chase by a single huntsman, he says,[1] was considered the highest act of heroism, and the man who had succeeded in killing an elephant, rhinoceros, or other big game animal was honoured by the whole kraal with marks of respect and was an object of universal admiration. On returning to his home he was subjected to the customary "anders-machen" rite. Proceeding to the central space where the people were assembled to receive him, he seated himself on a mat in the [5N] centre of the circle that formed about him. One of the old men then rose, and urinated all over him, "at the same time muttering some words whose meaning I was never able to understand or to learn." [276] The dagga pipe was next lighted and circulated as usual, but the hunter received only the ashes that remained, which were strewed over his body by the old man. From now on he enjoyed great honour, [301] and as a proof of his agility and heroism could wear on his head the bladder of the animal he had slain.

224 The ceremony over, he retired to his hut, where he remained secluded for three days, during which time he was fed with the best [634] meat and the finest provisions procurable. During this time also he was forbidden all intercourse with his wife. The latter had to leave the kraal every morning when the herds were driven out to pasture, and might not return again till they came back in the evening. [262] Outside the kraal she might not eat anything at all, and even when back in it had to live only upon such meagre fare as she could lay hands upon. At the end of the third day, when the hunter was [574] supposed to have recovered his former vigour and strength, his wife was reinstated in the hut; he slaughtered a fat sheep, invited all his neighbours to the feast, and thereafter could again live with her.

Kolb's description of this ceremony gives no indication that it was an initiation rite, but implies rather that it was performed whenever the occasion was offered by the killing of a big game animal. There is no reason, however, to suppose that this is contradictory to Wikar's account, from which it appears that the first time a man killed such an animal, or obtained the privilege of being regarded as the "master killer", afforded the opportunity for receiving him into the ranks of the hunters, signalized by the scarification, while on subsequent occasions the ceremony was merely repeated without the operation,

[1] *Vorgebirge der Guten Hoffnung*, 128–9.

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421 unobserved by others, to use for himself.[1] And the various ways of acquiring cattle, as well as the internal trade which we have noted, all point clearly to the existence of private property rights. These [685] rights, moreover, are adequately protected. Theft, the furtive or forcible removal of goods belonging to another, is regarded as a serious offence, punishable by severe fines and ostracism, even by [426] flogging, while an incorrigible thief would formerly be killed.[2] The payment of debts, again, is an obligation of honour. If a man is unable to satisfy his creditors, a trustee is appointed to take over and divide his assets among them. He is allowed to keep a few goats and cows, whose milk he may use for the maintenance of himself and his family, but he may not slaughter these animals, for he is regarded as holding them in trust for the creditors.[3]

577 With all this strict regard for private property rights, greed is far from being a characteristic of the Hottentots. They not only share to 574 the utmost with their fellows, but are also very hospitable to strangers, traits favourably commented upon by many observers.[4] A man in possession of food shares, and is expected to share, it freely with others, and greediness in this respect renders him an object of public scorn.[5] Objects of common use are also readily given away temporarily, and in the majority of cases even permanently. To take a goat from a [685] man's herds for food, even in his absence or without his permission, is not unlawful, provided he is informed of the deed; on the other hand the taking of an animal in order to sell it is prohibited. This hospitality is a general custom arising out of the conditions of the country, where for long distances food is unobtainable, and it is based on the idea of reciprocity. No Hottentot need leave a stranger's hut

[1] "Das Recht der Hottentotten," 349.

[2] Kolb, op. cit., 136–7; Schultze, op. cit., 318; Wandres, "Ueber Rechtsbewusstsein der Naman," 275; *Report on the Natives of S.W.A.*, 74.

[3] *Report on the Natives of S.W.A.*, 76; Kohler, op. cit., 351–2.

[4] Cf. Kolb, op. cit., 135; Tindall, *Great Namaqualand*, 40; Wikar, op. cit., 134; Hahn, "Die Nama-Hottentotten," 305; von François, op. cit., 222; Schultze, op. cit., 318; *Report on the Natives of S.W.A.*, 75.

[5] An extremely interesting statement of this principle is seen in the following entry made in his diary by Hendrik Witbooi, the famous chief of the //Hobesen:—

"Agreement dated 9th January, 1893:

"The agreement which I make with Francois Daniel Vloeis and with anyone who hires a farm from me is as follows:

"1. I charge him £12 per annum.

"2. If he follows his own customs on the farm and if he is unfriendly to the poor people and does not give them a bite when they come to him then I charge him £24 per annum.

"3. If strangers come to his farm and he is not hospitable to them but makes them pay for water and pasture, be they white, red, or black, then I charge him £36 per annum."

This document is signed by Hendrik Witbooi and witnessed by eight of his councillors. (Quoted by Kreft, "The Diary of Hendrik Witbooi," *J. S.W. Afri. Sci. Soc.*, ii (1926–7), 57–8.)

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or camp hungry, especially if of the same tribe; he is welcome, even in the owner's absence, to help himself to whatever there is.

It is customs such as these which have given rise to the use of the term "communism" in regard to the property laws of the Hottentots. It should by now be evident, however, that underlying the undoubtedly far-reaching liberality of the people there is always a clear recognition of private property rights. The Hottentot shares his food with others because he has the right to dispose of it, not because they have an equally legitimate claim to it; and this applies still more to live stock and objects of material culture.

This point is borne out by the special reciprocal relationship, *soregus*, to which reference has already been made.[1] This relationship, also known as *magus*, to give one another, must be ceremonially entered upon between the two persons concerned, and implies, as we have seen, mutual obligation and assistance in all aspects of life—they may refuse each other nothing. In practice this applies especially to property, where each may demand or take from the other whatever he pleases, and may not be refused.

Tindall gives a description of this custom which illustrates rather drastically its full implications in regard to property.[2] "It is usual among them [the Naman] to carry on a kind of 'maatschappy' or partnership. Two men, living perhaps three or four hundred miles apart, 'make mates,' the understanding is that each may take from the other whatever he pleases. They profess to believe that this is a very profitable kind of arrangement, and it is difficult to persuade them of the contrary. The following instance will illustrate the extent to which this 'magu' or 'give-each-other' system proceeds. A poor man at Nisbet Bath, had, by diligence, obtained a horse and gun, he had a good hat, a very decent suit of clothes, a warm overcoat, and his wife had a tolerably respectable wardrobe. One fine morning a mate, with whom he had in an evil hour entered into partnership, turned up from the borders of Damaraland, and claimed as his right, horse, gun, hat, clothes, coat, and all his wife's apparel, except her undress, and with these he departed with true native sang froid, leaving the other his tattered garments and riddled hat, which had been so repeatedly patched, that it was almost impossible to discern the original stuff. The probable sequel to this affair would be that the man would return his mate's visit, who would either manage to avoid

[1] Cf. Schultze, op. cit., 318–19; Wanders, "Ueber das Recht der Naman," 682.
[2] Op. cit., 40–2.

[See cat. 116, p. 243.—Analyst]

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Chapter XII

REGULATION OF PUBLIC LIFE

Political Institutions

642 Like most other aspects of their culture, the political organizatio
177 of the Hottentots in recent times shows to a considerable extent th
signs of Dutch influence. For information as to their original forn
of government we must therefore refer mainly to the accounts o
the earlier writers. Here, again, our principal authority is Kolb
who describes the political institutions of the Cape Hottentots mor
fully and explicitly than does any other observer.

643 He states[1] that at the head of every tribe there was a chief, *kouqu*
619 or *khoeque*, whose office was hereditary in the male line. The norma
622 heir to the chieftainship was the eldest son of the ruling chief. Failin
a son, the office passed to the nearest male relative, such as a brothe
or a brother's son, but never to a daughter. The new chief at hi
accession had to pledge himself before an assembly of the "captains"
of the tribe to preserve all the old laws and traditions of the people
and not to interfere with any established rights and prerogatives
● [574] He had also to slaughter a couple of sheep or an ox as a feast for th
"captains". Only these men and himself ate of the meat, while th
broth was given to their wives. On the following day or on some
suitable occasion a similar feast was provided by his wife for the
wives of the captains. This time the meat was eaten by the women
and the broth given to their husbands. There is no other record o
any installation ceremony connected with the chieftainship, so tha
the accuracy of Kolb's statements in this respect cannot be vouched for.

643 The functions of the chief were apparently purely political. He
619 led the army in war, he conducted the negotiations of peace, and he
622 presided over the tribal council. The latter was the real governing
645 body of the tribe. It consisted of the "captains" or headmen of
all the different local groups constituting the tribe, and was summoned
by the chief to his residence whenever any matter of public importance
arose. It dealt with all such questions as peace and war, disputes

[1] *Reise zum Vorgebirge der Guten Hoffnung*, 42–4; cf. Fritsch, *Eingeborenen Süd-Afrika's*, 321–2.

695 [195] questions, but prefer to arrive at their point by circumlocutions. When they have probed the matter to their satisfaction, or when the accused has either confessed or been reduced to helpless silence by all the cross-questioning, both parties, together with the witnesses, have to withdraw to a distance. The case is then discussed among themselves by the councillors, and judgment is arrived at unanimously, if possible. Only in cases where there is no consensus of opinion is the matter referred to the chief, whose casting vote settles the question finally.

The verdict, opening with the words: "In the name of the chief's law," is pronounced by the chairman, and is forthwith executed. 696 Sentences of death are carried out by the official executioner, who is 681 appointed from time to time by the council, and by his assistant; if corporal punishment has been decided upon, the *nou-aob*, "thrashing-man," gets into action; while any fines levied are collected by the magistrate. The costs of the action, in the form of goats paid as court fees, always fall upon the losing party. If this is the defendant, he must also replace the goats delivered at the beginning of the case by the complainant.

695 No torture is employed in legal trials, nor are there any special oaths or ordeals. Wandres describes, however, what he terms a sort of duel by warrant, which was sometimes resorted to in the past. This duel, *thigu*, could take place with or without weapons. When the councillors were unable to secure harmony between the litigants, the oldest of them took some sand in the palm of each hand, which he held out before the two men, or else he poured a little sand on to their shoulders. If the challenge was accepted, the sand was brushed away; but if one of the men refused it, he was branded as a coward and held to be in the wrong. Where both accepted the challenge, the councillors formed a ring around them. They then attacked each other with their fists, kicked, wrestled, and bit, until one of them • [574] was overpowered. Reconciliation followed. The victor slaughtered a fat sheep, which was eaten by him and his opponent, with the councillors as guests. Before the feast the two men shook hands in a friendly manner, and as sign of their reconciliation they ate together out of one dish. Finally there followed a general shaking of hands. The duel with weapons was of a more serious nature, and might even result in death. If reconciliation could not be brought about by the councillors, the two men left the court in a rage, and fought with their kirris or spears until one of them was stretched senseless, perhaps

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cause of turmoil and inter-tribal feuds."[1] Often the weaker tribes were reduced to great poverty and distress. New combinations would then be formed, and the victors of one year frequently became the vanquished of the next; but the bonds of cohesion were frail, and even a slight shock was usually sufficient to break up the alliance —an event repeatedly noted in the relations of the Hottentots with the early Dutch settlers.

The same capricious and unstable element runs through the history of the Nama tribes and their relations towards one another. "On the one hand," says Mrs. Hoernlé, "one finds a great deal of inter-marriage taking place between those tribes which happen to be near one another, and a great deal of visiting between the members of families so connected is always going on. Yet, on the other hand, there has never been sufficient feeling of solidarity between the tribes, for the Nama, or for the Hottentots in general, to organize themselves against a common enemy even when the danger was exceedingly great. Always one tribe has been played off against the others by all other peoples with whom they have come in conflict. There are many instances in their history in which two tribes have made an agreement with one another for some common object, but such agreements have always come to naught. There is even an interesting document, signed by most of the Nama and Orlam chiefs, agreeing to sink all differences and unite against the common enemy, the Herero, but the agreement was never actually put into practice."[2] Even the bonds holding the clans together to form a tribe were never very strong, still less was there any possibility for the tribes to be welded together to form a nation.

Treatment of Strangers

Visitors as a rule can pass freely from one tribe to another. Such visits were common amongst the Hottentots themselves, even in the early days, especially between families connected by marriage. There is no mention of any distinctive ceremonial reception accorded to these native visitors, apart from the special rite, recorded by Mrs. Hoernlé, which serves to protect the stranger from the hostile ghosts of the place. Organized trading visits from one Hottentot tribe to another do not appear to have occurred to any extent, if at all. But, as we have seen, both Bantu peoples and Bergdama would come

[1] Op. cit., 241.
[2] Op. cit., 24. The document referred to, drawn up in 1858, is translated in the *Report on the Administration of S.W. Africa*, 1922.

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439 609 to trade with the Naman, while from the beginnings of the European settlement white traders have moved freely among the Hottentots. No objection seems to have been raised as a rule to strangers coming in this way into the lands of the tribe. Only when misunderstandings arose or quarrels were provoked through high-handed treatment [721] would trouble ensue. This happened in 1497, and Vasco da Gama, the first European to meet with the Hottentots, came into conflict with them in St. Helena Bay, and again in 1510, when Francisco d'Almeida, late viceroy of Portuguese India, was killed with sixty-four of his men in a skirmish with the Hottentots of Table Bay. But on the whole the earliest travellers who, prompted by motives of trade or by curiosity, pushed on to previously unknown tribes, speak of a friendly and even cordial reception.

609 In one instance at least there is a record of special usages governing the reception of strangers in more recent times. The missionary 574 Hugo Hahn, who in 1844 visited Oasib, chief of the *Gei ǁKhauan*, 485 writes as follows: "I was received very cordially, and was also given a sheep for slaughter. There has existed in this tribe for some years a sort of police who see to it that every convenience is afforded to strangers—Nama, Bastards, or Europeans. When the traveller descends and outspans, special functionaries take his horse or his oxen, remove the saddle, give the animals water, lead them to pasture and at night bring them into safety from the lions. They take care that he receives enough milk, often also meat, as well as water and wood, and that he is not troubled by the children or other people. He is given a special mat hut, roomy and clean, in which he can rest. If he is alone, one of the men must sleep with him, who keeps the fire going or performs any other necessary services. For me a special sleeping place was prepared, as they know our aversion to lice. When the traveller wishes to depart, he informs one of the attendants, who tells the chief, and at the time indicated his ox or his horse is ready for him, even if it is in the middle of the night. No one thinks of demanding or giving payment. Probably," he goes on to say, "this is a renewal of some good old custom, as I do not know of its like in any of the other tribes."[1]

609 Theophilus Hahn also speaks very highly of the great hospitality 574 to strangers, but adds that if the guest does not ingratiate himself sufficiently, it may well happen that, once they have passed the

[1] *Tagebuch*, entry under 28th September, 1844, published in Moritz, "Die ältesten Reiseberichte über D.S.W.A.," 1916, p. 191.

2: Schapera E-4, 5 (no date) 1930
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might be buried alive, or else placed in some exposed spot or in bushes to be destroyed by the elements or by wild animals.[1] Similarly, according to Hahn, "a man who is killed as a criminal, or who is slain according to the rules of the vendetta, or a slave killed by the master, or enemies killed in the battle—all are left to the animals of the desert to be feasted upon, so that they will be entirely annihilated." Such people who are devoured by vultures or hyenas are called *//gauna //ora khoin*, i.e. people who died the *//gauna* death.[2]

There existed among the Hottentots also the custom, already noted among the Bushmen, of abandoning elderly people to their fate. Kolb describes it rather more fully than do other writers. When old people become helpless or decrepit, he says, their eldest son or nearest relation applies to the people of the kraal for permission, never refused, to relieve himself of the burden and to deliver the suffering old person from the miserable condition to which he is reduced. The son kills an ox or a few sheep to regale the men of the kraal, who take leave of their old neighbour. Then, on the appointed day, the old man or woman is placed on a riding ox and, accompanied by an escort, is conducted to a small hut specially built for the purpose at some distance from the kraal. Here he is left alone, with a small quantity of provisions placed by his side, to die ultimately of starvation or to be devoured by wild beasts.[3]

This account may not be quite accurate in all its details. But there is ample evidence that the exposure of old people in this way was common and widespread among all the Hottentots.[4] Hahn, inquiring into the reason for the practice, was told by the Naman that it was sometimes done by very poor people who had not enough food to support their aged parents. "But sometimes," he adds, "even if there was food enough, and if people, especially women, who had cattle and milk-cows of their own, gave suspicion that they were under the influence of *//Gaunab*, and did secretly mischief by practising witchcraft, they were left to die from starvation. The people, awe-stricken, were almost compelled to fly from them."[5]

Where burial takes place, it is accompanied by a series of rites.

[1] Cf. above, p. 266.
[2] Op. cit., 86.
[3] *Vergeldinge der Guten Hoffnung*, 133.
[4] Grevenbroeck, "Uit den Ouden Tijd," 24; Sparrman, *Voyage to the Cape*, i, 358; Campbell, *Travels in S. Africa*, 428; Albrecht, "Beobachtungen im Gross-Namalande," 2643; Shaw, *Memorials of S. Africa*, 40–1; Moffat, *Missionary Labours in S. Africa*, 133–6 Fritsch, *Eingeborenen Süd-Afrika's*, 334.
[5] Op. cit., 86; cf. 74.

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them with a dance on reed-pipes, or better, bark-pipes, is *ǂaba xaĩre*. The profane reed-dances or reed-songs are of a very different nature. Either the fate of a hero who fell in a battle or lost his life on a hunting expedition is deplored; and on such an occasion a performance is connected with it." [1]

The reed dances are usually held in the evening and often last through the whole night, especially when there is moonlight. The occasions of the */gein*, religious dances, are naturally determined by the character of the dance. Those in which the Moon is invoked are held at New Moon and at Full Moon; Hahn mentions another, at which *Tsui //Goab* is prayed to for rain, which is held when the Pleiades first appear above the eastern horizon; still another, in which */Gurub*, the Thunder, is invoked, even takes place, as we have seen, when a heavy thunderstorm is approaching.[2] The "profane" dances are held on any festive occasion, especially when anybody is emerging from a */nau* seclusion, as, e.g., in the girls' puberty ceremony. If any illustrious stranger visits a kraal, he also is often welcomed with a reed-dance, an honour accorded to several of the early European travellers.[3] But in all probability any bright evening, whether specially significant or not, provides the occasion for such an entertainment.

In these dances [4] the men normally form a ring, all facing inwards, each with the upper part of his body bent forward, and his lips on the pipe. Then, to the accompaniment of their music, they hop up and down on both legs simultaneously, the knees slightly bent and one foot in front of the other, and move about jerkily and slowly in this way. The women, "trolling" or singing with loud voices and clapping their hands in front of the face to the rhythm of the music, dance round the men in a larger outer ring. They move forward in small, often very small, steps, with buttocks prominently thrust out, and waggling their hips. There is no fixed number of dancers. The dance has such an irresistible attraction for the Hottentots that any group of dancers rapidly grows in size. Mothers with babies on their backs, women returning to the kraal with firewood or other burdens, attach themselves to the ring; even old matrons whose sight is failing, says von François, become as if electrified when they hear the dance music, and dance like energetic flappers!

[1] Op. cit., 27-8. [2] Ibid., 58-60, *passim*.
[3] Ibid., 28; cf. Wikar, "Beschr. van Plettenberg," 127.
[4] Schinz, op. cit., 31-2; von François, op. cit., 228; Schultze, op. cit., 377.

by their names. In their communications they have titles of honour in accordance with the degree of relationship. 593 576

It might be mentioned here that the missionaries have succeeded in introducing family names which were unknown to the Nama before. These family names are derived from the Nama language, the heathen names of the grandfathers and great-grandfathers being changed into the family names of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Only the Orlam tribes have family names which were given to them by their masters in the Cape, *e.g.*, Teapot, Vlermuis, Afrikaner, etc., etc. 551 [619]

8. Their old national dress is very seldom worn. It consisted of home-dressed skins which were worn as aprons in front and at the back with a leather belt; and a large skin which served as a cloak and blanket and, twisted over the right shoulder and underneath the left arm, served as a bag for the gatherer of veld-kos. 291

At present both men and women go clad in European clothes. Coloured designs are preferred. While the Herero women have clung to the mode of dress introduced by the wives of missionaries 60 years ago, the Nama has not adopted any permanent national dress for the women and girls. [177]

9. Instead of the old anointing of the body with fat, they have resorted to cleaning themselves with water and soap, although everywhere Nama, who regard the application of soap and water as detrimental to health, are still to be found. 302 [515]

The habit of the women to powder their bodies with "buchu" which they make for themselves by powdering a great variety of shrubs and roots, is still in vogue to-day, and there are still women who hideously paint their faces with a blackish red salve during the period of menstruation, or early pregnancy and on cold winter days. [841 843]

10. The Nama is not miserly or avaricious. What he has in the form of food or other means of enjoyment he shares in the first place with his family and also with strangers. 574

To smoke alone or to eat a piece of bread which has been obtained accidentally is regarded as very unbecoming. Servants who labour for Europeans and receive their food there are wont to carry part of a special tit-bit home to share it with their people, unless the master, not knowing the Nama custom, should demand that all be eaten before his eyes so that his servants, for whom it is intended, may have the benefit of it and not strangers. [576]

11. The Nama is decidedly inclined to sociability. It is his wont to squat or sit on a low chair near the fireside at night and to tell to the last details and discuss the news of the day; nor do they separate till very late in the night. The Christians like sitting round the fire at night untiringly singing their songs and hymns. They still take great pleasure in the Reed-dance on bright moonlight nights. On 571 535 [521]

8: Dapper Q-4 (no date) 1933

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NAMA

NAMAQUAS.

The Hottentots named Namaquas[41]) live at the present time about eighty or ninety miles east-north-east of the Cape, but very far inland. In 1661 the commander of the Dutch fort, Heer Riebeeck, sent thirteen men there, with four pack oxen, to see if no gold or other valuable objects were to be found amongst them.[42]) They came across the Namaquas about eighty or ninety miles inland north-east of the Cape, and on going up to them were received with every sign of friendship and welcome, and presented with sheep. Their arrival was also greeted with an uncommonly curious musical performance. About one hundred musicians, each with a hollow reed of different length from the others, stood in a ring, in the centre of which a man beat time with a stick; and by blowing on these reeds produced as pleasant a harmony as if each reed were a trumpet of the marines. After the end of this performance, which lasted two or three hours and passed off with considerable gaiety, our men were at the king's request brought into his hut, and there entertained with milk and sheep's flesh. In return they presented the king with some copper, red beads, brandy and tobacco, which neither he nor his people had ever seen smoked, but they all learned this in a short time, even the women and children. Finally the king showed them a spot just outside his camp where they could rest and sleep.[43])

A few of the older people still know their own language, but the great majority now speak only Afrikaans, which is the regular medium of intercourse even amongst themselves. In South West Africa also the whole culture and power of the Naman has been hopelessly broken down, although for the most part they still retain their own language; and here too all of them have a good deal of mixed blood, brought into them first by their own relatives from the south, and then by mixture with the Germans and other whites (cf. Schapera, *Khoisan Peoples*, 48-9).

42) This was the expedition under Pieter Cruythoff, which left the Fort on Jan. 30, 1661, and returned on March 10. Its Journal, written by P. van Meerhoff, is appended to the Dagverhaal of van Riebeeck (entry of March 11, 1661, with additional remarks obtained orally from the travellers), and reprinted verbatim in Godée-Molsbergen, *op. cit.*, 1, 48-63.

43) Their reception by the Namaqua is fully described by Meerhoff in his journal of the expedition, upon which Dapper's informant has evidently drawn.

10: Grevenbroek F-5 (ca. 1694) 1933
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Angry humours, inflations, inflammations, tumours and other swellings they treat by sucking with their mouths as successfully as our physicians by cupping.[44]) I am informed by the parents that a European girl scarcely ten years old was treated in this way by a native woman who managed to suck from the pudenda a stone the size of a bean. 752

When a convalescent has been strengthened by wholesome broths and medicines, the priest or soothsayer shaves all his hair off with a razor. Then he rubs him from the tips of his toes to the hair on his head with green leaves, like our willows, but smaller, and with a smell like apple-skin. After that he washes him in warm water, and, finally, when the cure is complete, in cold. Furthermore a sacrifice for health is made with a sheep or two, and if the restored invalid is sufficiently rich in cattle, the victim may be an ox or other plough-animal or draught-animal. The priest smears the man with the fat of the victim and sprinkles him with bochu powder; next the entrails of the animal are plaited and hung round his neck like an amulet; then his blanket is anointed with fat and sprinkled with bochu, and at last he is let go, well and whole, to banquet with his fellows. The doctor's reward is to be welcomed among his friends at a feast of thanksgiving for his recovery.[45]) 757 782 [824] [574]

Healing or noxious plants and their qualities they know extremely well. I remember their pointing out a flower to me and telling me that, when it sprouts from the earth, their women every year in the month of September during several days fall into a deep sleep and drowsiness; it is as if a torpor had overcome them, and they lie snoring in a sort of cataleptic trance till late in the day[46]). They are also able to foretell the weather; nor do they seem to be wholly ignorant of the various movements of the stars and constellations, as may be inferred from an instance I shall quote below. 824 278 821

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[44]) This rite appears to be essentially the same as that still performed among the Nama, although it varies somewhat in detail. At the end of any grave illness, the patient, who has hitherto been secluded in a hut where he was subject to various taboos, is ceremonially cleansed with a mixture of moist cowdung and mineral powder, is given a new set of garments to wear, takes part in a special purification meal with all the other people who have recovered from the same disease, and is finally ceremonially reintroduced to all the ordinary daily tasks from which he was cut off during his seclusion (Mrs. A. W. Hoernlé, *Harvard African Studies*, II, 71-9; *cf.* Schapera, 406-7, 256 ff.).

[45]) I have been unable to find any confirmation for this statement, and cannot imagine to what plant G. is referring.

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deserters they arrest and bring back home in hope of a reward. They make trusty bearers, porters, carriers, post-boys and couriers. They chop wood, mind the fire, work in the kitchen, prune vines, gather grapes, or work the wine press industriously. They clear wild ground, and when the stones have been picked out of it, break it up with dibble, hoe, or mattock. Without relaxation they plough, sow, and harrow. From field, vineyard or garden they clean out the weeds with their rakes, and at harvest time they exert themselves indefatigably, their heads bound with ivy and convolvulus so that the green clustering leaves may mitigate the fierceness of the sun's burning rays. A troop of Bacchic revellers you might say, and indeed the resemblance is complete save that the followers of Bacchus brandished goblets in their hands and were drenched with wine, whereas our natives at the harvest have a sickle in one hand and the corn stalks in the other, and whether harvesting, threshing, or winnowing are drenched in sweat.

Their wives and daughters make reliable washerwomen and busy chars. They wash plates and dishes, clean up dirt, gather sticks from the fields round-about, light the fires, cook well, and provide cheap labour for the Dutch.[**])

It is perfectly plain that without the aid of these slaves, our farmers, stout fellows though they be, would be groaning bitterly over their toil in the fields. But, oh, the shame of it! as usual too much good fortune has bred sloth, and many are enervated as if by the spoils of Salmacis, won without toil or sweat.

It will not bore you, I think, and it will be à propos, if I tell you that I have seen a Hottentot woman, who in return for a day's labour had been given some scrape in a platter by a certain Dutchman. She began to crow with delight like a hen gathering her chickens, calling her people together and making a regular distribution of her booty among them, and hardly keeping a mouthful for herself. All alike delight in this communion of goods.[***]) Even a pipe of tobacco when kindled is passed round from mouth to mouth of the crowd that keeps running up, until the weed has vanished into smoke and ash. Let the Christians learn from the natives to vie with one another in well-doing.

For the irrigation of the soil there is no lack of limpid, wholesome springs, streams and rivers, the incredible clearness and sweetness of which has often so occasioned or increased my thirst that you would have declared me to be a soldier of Jerubaal at the last testing.[***])

[**]) See above, p. 47.
[***]) Judges, 7, 4-6.